

**Brown Bittern in the Kimberley, Western Australia.**—Condon (*Checklist of the Birds of Australia, 1975*) gives the distribution of the Brown Bittern, *Botaurus poeciloptilus*, as confined to southern Australia. There are no records of this species from the Northern Territory (Storr, *Birds of the Northern Territory, Spec. Publ. West. Aust. Mus., 1977 (7)*), in Queensland it is confined to the wet south-eastern corner (Storr, *List of Queensland Birds, Spec. Publ. West. Aust. Mus., 1973 (5)*), and in southern western Australia it is known from as far north as Moora, though the type locality of the subspecies *westralensis* Mathews was purported to be Shark Bay (Mathews, *Novit. Zool., 1912: 18: 235*). The first specimen (WAM A12495) from the Kimberley Division, Western Australia, was collected by W. H. Butler on October 22, 1971 at Argyle Lagoon, Ord River. It is a female with an unconvoluted oviduct, so may have been a young bird, but the skull is fully pneumatized.

Specimens in the Western Australian Museum indicate that males average larger in wing and bill measurements than females (Table 1). Amadon and Woolfenden (*Am. Mus. Novit., 1952, 1564*) had little material from Western Australia when they concluded that *westralensis* was a synonym of *poeciloptilus*. The mensural data in Table 1 support their conclusion that Western Australian birds are not smaller than those in south-eastern Australia.

TABLE 1.—MEASUREMENTS (mm) OF *BOTAURUS POEILOPTILUS* FROM WESTERN AUSTRALIA.

WAM. Reg.	Sex	Wing	Bill	Tarsus	Locality
A759	♂	347	72	100	—
A10959	♂	338	73	102	North Dandalup
A4978	♂	324	73	102	Muchea
A3677	♂	326	71	92	—
A10036	♂	280	64	84	Herdsmen Lake
A4505	♀	303	62	93	South Belmont
A4494	♀	302	66	91	South Belmont
8450	♀	300	65	102	Pinjarra
A3643	♀	295	63	100	Swanbourne
A12495	♀	306	72	90	Argyle Lagoon

—JULIAN FORD, Western Australian Institute of Technology.

**Two new occurrences of the Mediterranean Snail, *Theba pisana* (Müller), in Western Australia.**—Travellers along Eyre Highway from the days before the present sealed road would not readily forget the old roadhouse at Madura, located at the foot of the Hampton Escarpment some 2 km west of the present facility. In the course of a visit to the now abandoned site in October 1976, I found a thriving population of the introduced Mediterranean Snail, *Theba pisana* (Müller) on bushes growing around the ruin and on the side of the escarpment nearby. As usual when gathered in the hand, the animals quickly emerged from the shells and became active. All shells seen were pallid, with the characteristic brown spiral markings either weak or absent.

The native snails *Bothriembryon barretti* Iredale, *Simumelon nullarboricum* (Tate) and *Angasella oligopleura* (Tate) are common here and elsewhere along the Hampton Escarpment. There is as yet no evidence of any displacement of native species by *T. pisana* but the site would repay future checking on this aspect. In fine weather all three native species withdraw into crevices beneath rocks; *B. barretti* and *S. nullarboricum* may also burrow into soil under vegetation. When collected, the native species tend to be much less active than *T. pisana*. Thus aestivation behaviour of the two groups of snails contrasts strongly. Whether the introduced species will be able to survive the droughts that affect the district from time to time remains to be seen.

In September 1976, living specimens of *T. pisana* were found by Mr. T. Hargreaves near his residence in Durlacher Street, Denham, Shark Bay. They are suspected by him to have been brought there on a vehicle

that had previously been left standing for several weeks at a snail-infested locality at Geraldton. This is the first authenticated record of *T. pisana* from Shark Bay, though there has been a previous, unsubstantiated report of snails in another part of the townsite. Whether the species will become established there permanently remains to be seen.

Mr. Hargreaves' suggestion on the source of these snails is likely to be correct. Once while changing a car wheel near Geraldton, I left some vehicle fittings on the ground by the road for about 10 minutes. On picking them up, several living *T. pisana* were found attached to or crawling on the fittings and could easily have been transported away.

*T. pisana* now has a very wide distribution in south-western Australia and it is doubtful if there is a single coastal settlement or fishing spot between Kalbarri and Esperance without its population of this species. The motor vehicle has probably been the decisive factor in this range expansion. The Madura and Shark Bay records are the most peripheral to date for the species in Western Australia. The climates of the two localities are not dissimilar; Madura rainfall averages 247 mm and Denham 236 mm per annum, the six wettest months being March to August (winter) in both cases. Soils in both places are strongly calcareous.

The specimens are now in the collection of the Western Australian Museum.

—G. W. KENDRICK, Western Australian Museum.

**The Little Shearwater on St. Alouarn Island, W.A.**—The Little Shearwater, *Puffinus assimilis*, was first recorded on St. Alouarn Island, off Cape Leeuwin, Western Australia, by Dr Mary Gillham (*W. Aust. Nat.*, 9 (2), 1963: 29-46) on November 4, 1959. She found "one living specimen" and "several fresh carcasses", but apparently checked few burrows. Dr Gillham also reported Little Penguins, *Eudyptula minor*, breeding, and smaller burrows which she stated "almost certainly belonged" to White-faced Storm-petrels, *Pelagodroma marina*.

On September 17, 1976, with J. A. K. Lane, G. B. Pearson and my wife, I visited the island from 0700 to 0900 hours. We found Little Penguins breeding close to the landing place but no extensive search was made for these birds as the weather was expected to deteriorate. However, of those found, four were each brooding two eggs, one had two very small chicks, and one was in a burrow too deep to determine the contents.

The weather prediction was not good and we anticipated that our stay on the island would be a brief one. Accordingly our efforts were directed mainly towards a search for breeding sea-birds other than penguins. Medium-sized burrows, smaller than those of Wedge-tailed Shearwaters, *P. pacificus*, but larger than those of storm-petrels, were spread rather sparingly over the island in a number of places. About 150 were examined. One was empty and the other contained a King's Skink *Egernia* prints, sand scratching and occasionally small brown or white feathers were seen in or near the burrows. Some wings which were thought initially to belong to White-faced Storm-Petrels were found, but the heads and legs were missing. Eventually an almost-complete carcass of a Little Shearwater was located, and the other wings matched. (The wing of *P. marina* may be only 15-20 mm shorter than that of *P. assimilis*; with a cursory examination it is otherwise similar). Finally, two Little Shearwaters were captured together in a burrow but no egg or chick was present. Both birds were banded and returned to the burrow.

Two other burrows which appeared to be those of storm-petrels were examined. One was empty and the other contained a King's Skink, *Egernia kingii*. No other evidence of storm-petrels was found during the visit.

Eight Sooty Oystercatchers, *Haematopus fuliginosus*, and two Peregrine Falcons, *Falco peregrinus*, were also seen during the visit. The falcons undoubtedly would be responsible for predation of the petrels.

The anticipated rising winds caused a hasty departure from the island.

I am very grateful to Jim Lane and Grant Pearson who made this visit possible.

—S. G. LANE, 65 Wood Street, Lane Cove, N.S.W.